



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

FROM: Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

DATE: July 9, 2009

RE: Transportation Safety Commission Minutes for July 2, 2009

The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday July 2, 2009 at the Department of Planning & Community Development, 409 S Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (chairman), Lee Eschelman (JMU), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Doug Stader (DMV), Drew Williams (Public Works), Sgt. Felicia Glick (County Sheriff's Department), Mary-Hope Gangwer (Police)

Guests Present include: Faith Castellano (Public Works)

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

1. Special Presentation: James Madison University, Lee Eschelman – JMU Student Travel Patterns

Mr. Eschelman presented a study that he conducted during the Spring 2009 semester of JMU student travel patterns on and off campus. His goal was to determine why students utilize the modes of transportation that they do. Out of 18,000 students, over 2,000 surveys were collected (11%). *(see presentation attached)*.

Home highlights from the survey : the survey included 27 questions both quantitative and open-ended; morning rush hour is between 8am-11am; evening rush hour between 2pm into the evening; 44% of

students survey said their primary mode of transportation getting to/from campus is “I drive myself”, followed by 18% take the bus; for secondary mode of transportation 23% said they drive with others and 22% take the bus; on campus for the primary mode 69% said they walked, and for secondary mode 42% said they take the bus; 42% of students said they would bike more if the city/JMU had bike lanes; students would ride the bus more if there was more frequency (15%), buses ran later (13%), reliable/on time (11%).

No Drive Day has been a success on JMU campus, and Mr. Eschelman suggested a possible no Drive Month be considered by JMU in Fall 2009. Mr. Eschelman has been coordinating bus routing and frequencies with the city’s Public Transit Department.

There was discussion amongst the commission regarding severe traffic impacts to I-81 Exit 245, Port Republic Rd, Bluestone Dr. during JMU special events such as Football games and graduation. A commission member noted that at other universities, attendees walked further or utilized shuttle buses to get to the center of campus. Sgt. Glick noted that emergency vehicles entering campus during these events have great difficulty.

There was also discussion about reconfiguration of the I-81 Exit 245 interchange and that traffic impacts might be less severe if JMU had a separate off ramp directly onto Bluestone Dr.

2. Grace St & S High St and JMU plans for other corridors surrounding campus

(Please see last month’s meeting summary for additional details.) Public Works staff has reviewed the intersection of Grace St and S High St and has developed possible solutions for improving pedestrian safety at this intersection, including possibly split phasing the lights on Grace St. However, while reviewing this intersection and reviewing JMU’s Comprehensive Master Plan, city staff has many questions regarding JMU’s plans and how JMU’s development will impact the Grace St corridor from the hospital to S High St.

It was recommended that commission members not consider requests from JMU to change traffic patterns until the commission and city staff know more about expansion plans and impacts to transportation safety. Mr. Williams noted that instead of making quick conclusions/recommendations that it would be best to better understand plans for changes so that staff and commission members can review corridors holistically, rather than this intersection now and a nearby intersection later.

Commission members agreed that Mr. Blessing will write a letter on behalf of the commission to JMU administration requesting an overview of JMU’s Comprehensive Master Plan and an idea of changes within the next 5-10 years be presented to the city. Mr. Eschelman shared that new changes and facilities that are planned for in the short term include: RMH relocation, baseball stadium at Memorial hall, completion of the arts building, the new dining hall on University Blvd, new dormitory, and the athletic fields complex at the corner of Port Republic Road and Neff Avenue.

Staff noted that the city is currently working on updating its Comprehensive Plan now for adoption in 2010 and there will be opportunity for commissioners and other stakeholders to review.

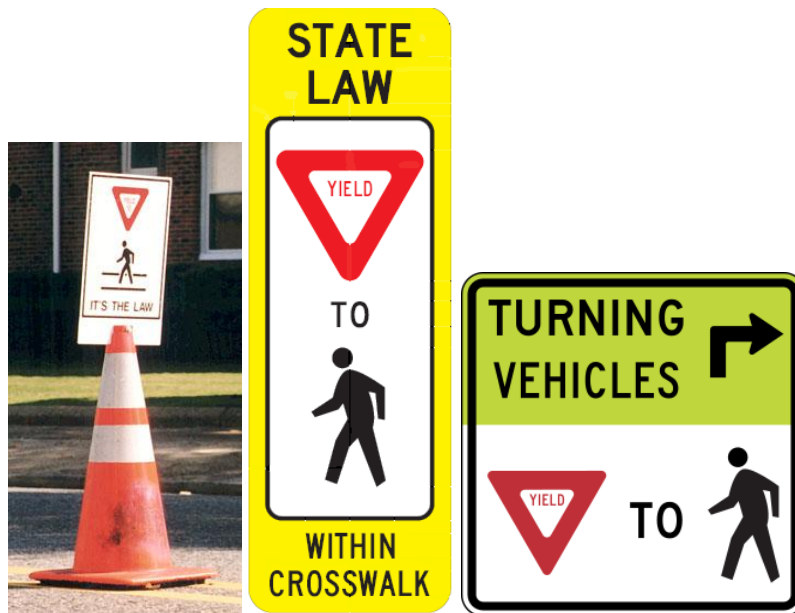
3. Safe Routes to School – Waterman Grant

Ms. Dang requested a letter of support from the commission for Waterman Elementary School's application for funding from VDOT's Safe Routes to School Program for infrastructure improvements surrounding Waterman Elementary School. Many of these improvements include the construction of new sidewalks and installation of a pedestrian signal at Virginia Ave and 3rd St to improve safety and encourage walking and bicycling to school. Bicycle facilities are strongly being considered and feasibility is currently being reviewed by the city engineer's office. City staff has been working in partnership with Safe Routes to School Task Force, which includes students, parents, the school principal, RMH Community Health staff, and others to develop the Waterman Elementary School SRTS Travel Plan and future application. The Travel Plan will be submitted this summer and the grant application by December.

Mr. Blessing presented Ms. Dang with the letter requested.

4. S Main St & Port Republic Road

Ms. Dang shared with the commission city staff's idea for temporary educational signage options that would reflect some combination of the following signs:



The purpose of the signage would be to educate motorists. They would be temporarily placed at an intersection in which comments/concerns were received from citizens or staff for a period of 2-3 weeks and then removed.

It was noted by commission members that permanent signs quickly become background and ignored by motorists. Additionally, there are concerns by staff that installing a permanent sign at one intersection would prompt citizens to desire similar signs at more intersections. Temporary signs would better catch motorists attention, as they are new to the surrounding environment.

Concerns were raised about temporary signs on a traffic cone (as pictured) might get knocked over, vandalized or stolen. Public Works staff will continue to explore signage and mounting options. Some ideas presented by commission members included mounting the signs to a utility pole with an orange placard background or temporary orange flags.

Mr. Blessing inquired what other Virginia localities do with similar safety issues. Public Works staff will inquire with Fairfax and Arlington Counties.

New Business

5. Vine St & Country Club Rd

Officer Deeds stated that he saw a vehicle almost get hit by another vehicle that was in the left turn lane from Vine St onto Country Club Rd, but went straight towards Market St instead. Public Works noted the proposed changes they shared with the commission in a past meeting and noted changes will be fully implemented to improve safety at these intersections.

Announcements

Mr. Stader announced that fatalities from motor vehicle accidents were down this year. Education and enforcement programs, such as “click it or ticket” have been successful. Pedestrian fatalities also slightly down.

There was discussion about the new text messaging while driving law. \$25 fine for first offence, and \$50 for second, as well as a 3 point demerit. This is a secondary traffic offence.

Ms. Dang announced that the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Advisory Committee is hosting a Public Input Meeting on September 21, 2009, 6:30-8:30pm, at Thomas Harrison Middle School. *(See attached flyer.)*

New Business

This discussion was postponed until next meeting due to new agenda items.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, August 6, 2009 at 9am, at the Department of Planning & Community Development, 409 S Main Street.

Adjourned

JMU TRAFFIC CONGESTION SURVEY – SPRING 2009

SUMMARY ABBREVIATED VERSION

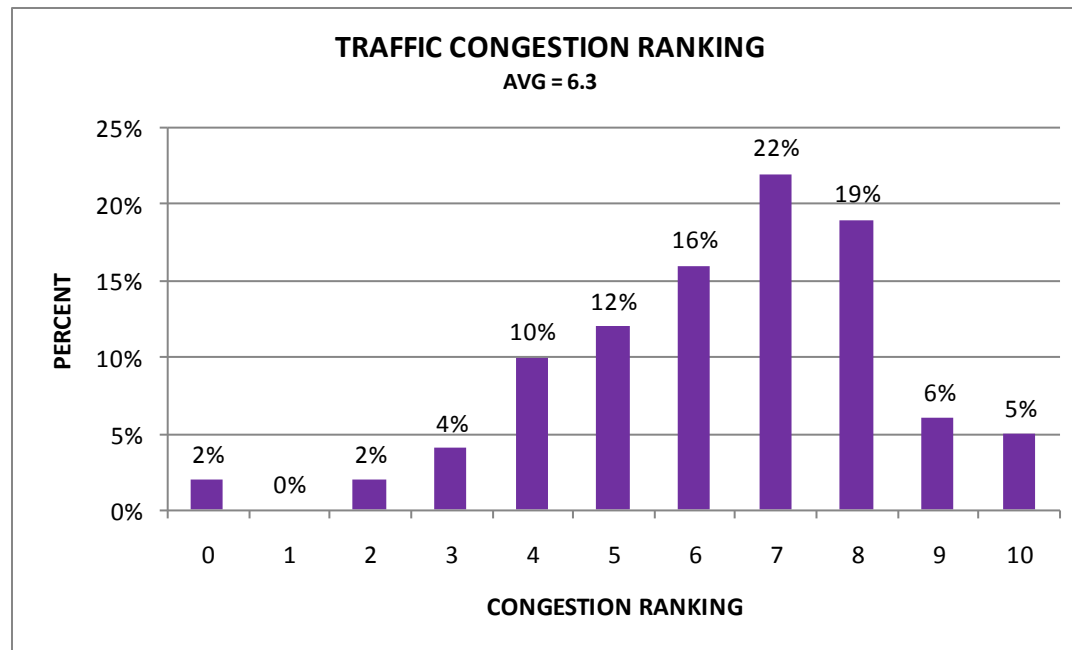
- A traffic congestion survey was performed using Qualtrics software during the spring of 2009. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the transportation mode selection decision-making processes of the JMU student body - why they do or do not use certain modes, and what their recommendations are for reducing traffic congestion on campus. All transportation modes were focused on – auto, bus, biking, walking, motorcycle/moped.
- The survey was developed by the TDM and included twenty-seven questions that were both quantitative and open-ended. The open-ended questions were designed to collect the views of the students concerning each question without any biases being introduced by the format/structure of the particular question.
- One of the objectives of the survey process was to maximize the response rate of the survey. The following steps were taken to accomplish this:
 1. The survey was pre-tested with several students and transportation experts, both on and off campus
 2. The answers to the survey were to be kept confidential
 3. Prizes were promised to each respondent that completed the survey.
 4. The surveyor's name (Lee Eshelman) was included when the survey was distributed instead of using a department name (this was suggested by several students)
- The survey was distributed over the web to the entire student body. A total of 2,026 completed surveys were received, or about 11% of the student population.
- This document contains the highlights of the survey that pertained to bicycling. Many additional details are available.

- The survey began with asking several high-level questions:
 - ☐ Do you live on or off campus, and where?
 - ☐ Prior to attending JMU, where did you live?
 - ☐ On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate traffic congestion on campus?
 - ☐ What are your suggestions for reducing traffic congestion?
 - ☐ What are the most important transportation needs on campus?

- The survey then focused on transportation mode usage to get TO/FROM campus, and GETTING AROUND ON CAMPUS.
 - ☐ How many round trips to/from campus per day
 - ☐ What times of the day to students arrive at and depart from campus
 - ☐ For drivers, the survey also asked which parking lots they use
 - ☐ For bus riders, which routes they use

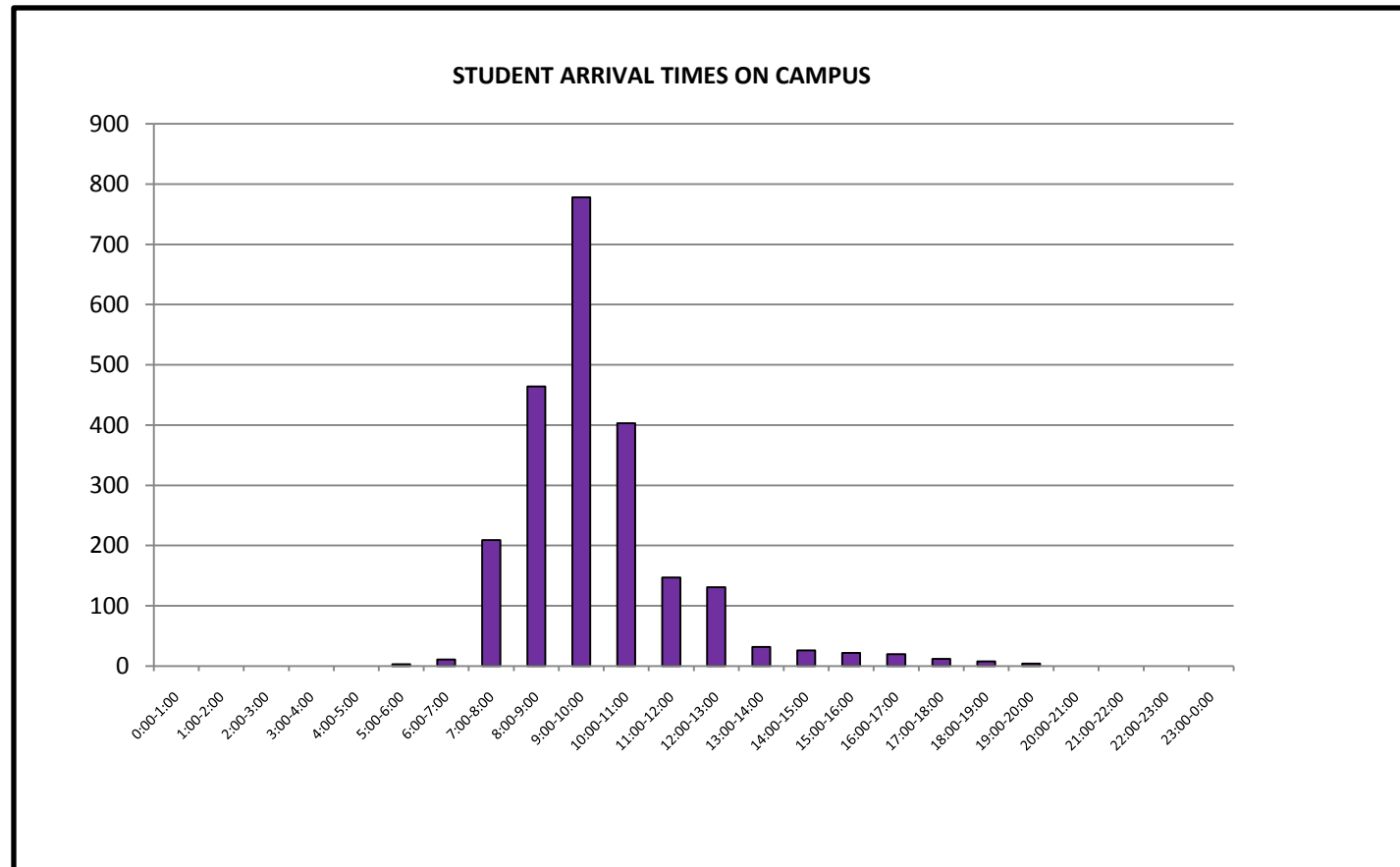
- The survey then asked more detailed questions concerning each mode – auto, bus, bike, motorcycle/moped, walking. For these questions the participants were instructed to only complete the sections that applied to them, e. g., "if you drive complete the Driving Section, if you don't drive, skip this section".

- One of the first questions was directed at quantifying the perception of the amount of traffic congestion on campus. As shown below, the campus congestion rating averaged 6.3 on a scale of zero to ten.

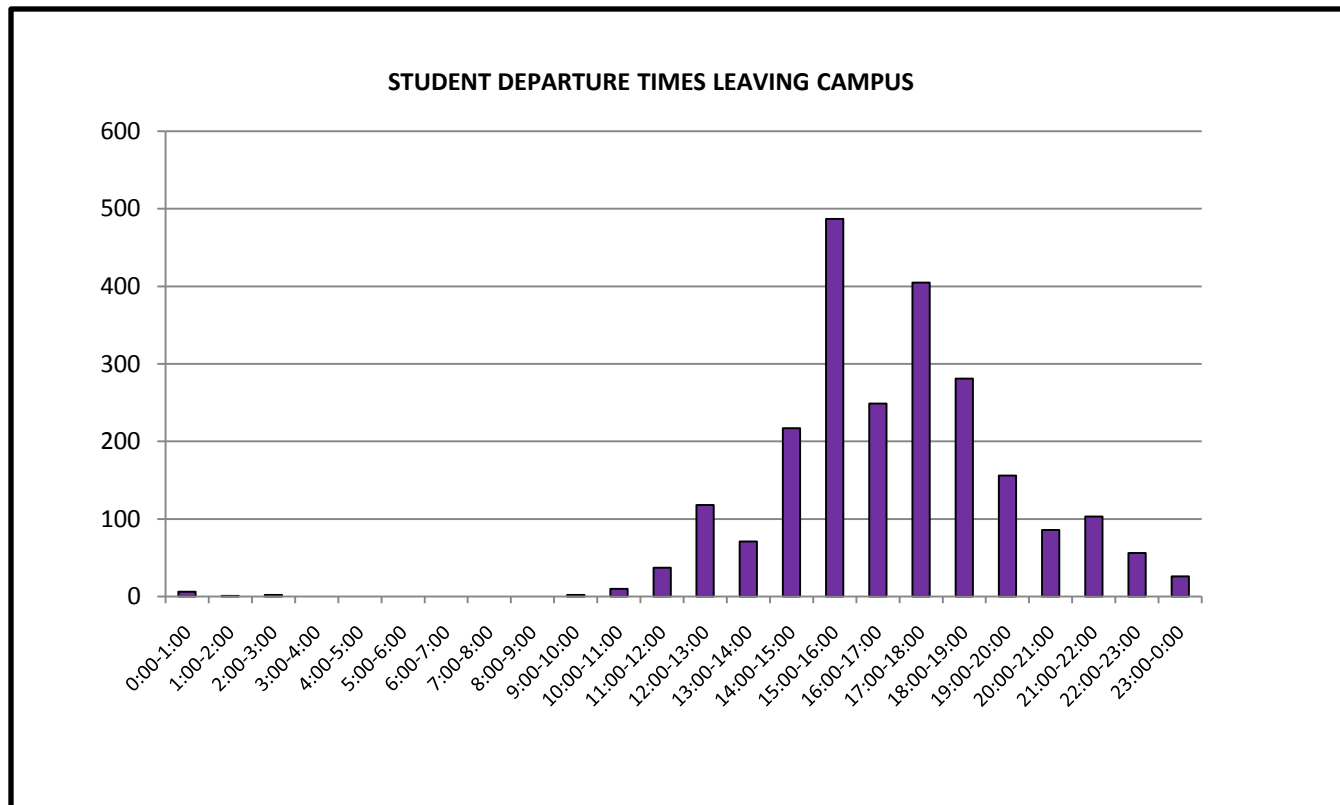


- Anticipating that the answer to the above question may depend on where the student lived prior to coming to JMU, a question was included in the survey to identify these locations as mentioned previously.

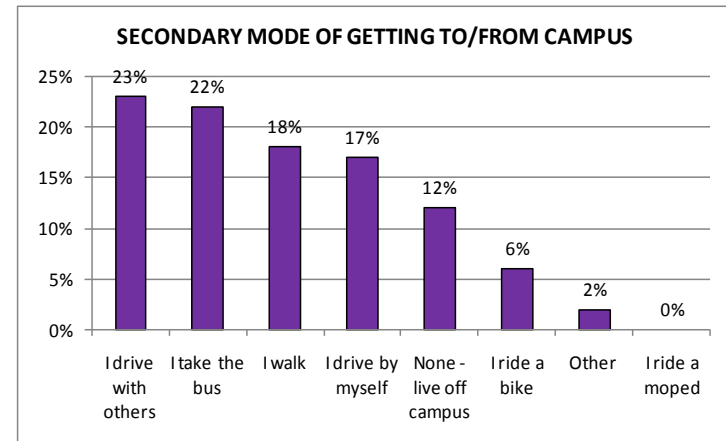
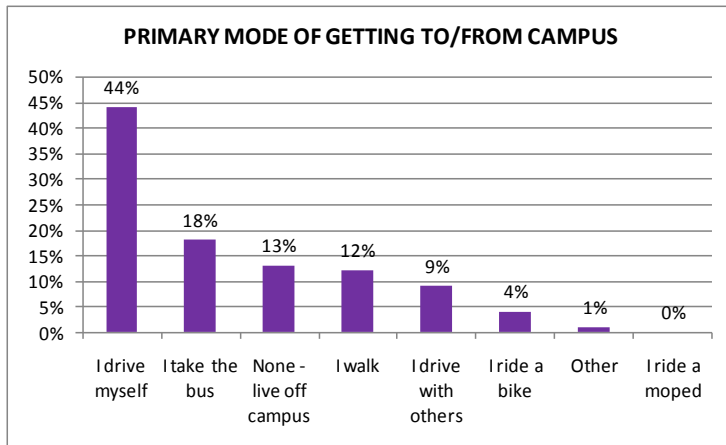
- Morning “Rush Hour”. The majority of the students arrive on campus between 8AM and 11AM



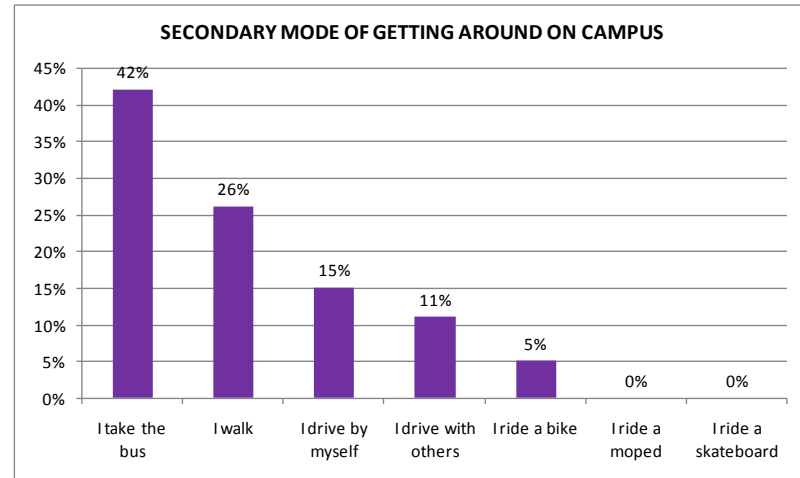
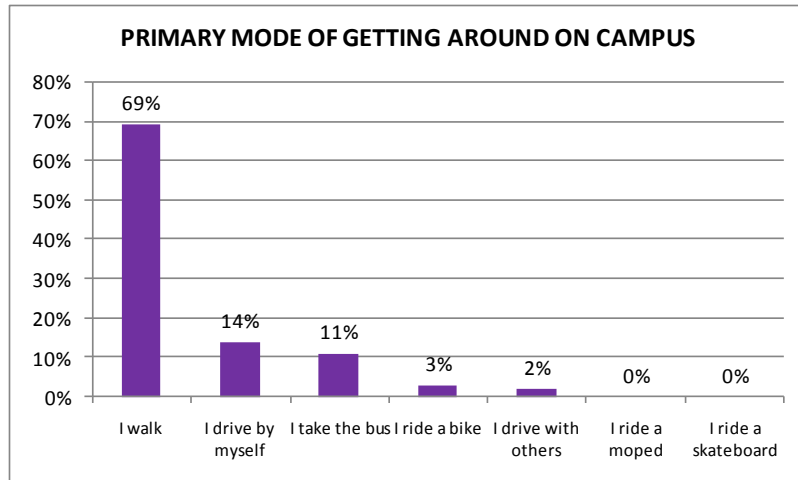
- Afternoon/Evening “Rush Hour” Students leave the campus starting at 2PM and extending late into the evening.



- The survey then was directed at providing a ranking of mode usage for students getting TO/FROM campus. As can be seen, the primary mode is driving (44%), followed by taking the bus (18%); the secondary mode is “driving with others” (23%), and taking the bus (22%). Biking ranges from 4% to 6%.



- The primary mode of GETTING AROUND ON CAMPUS is walking (69%). The secondary mode is taking the bus. Biking ranges from 3% to 5%.

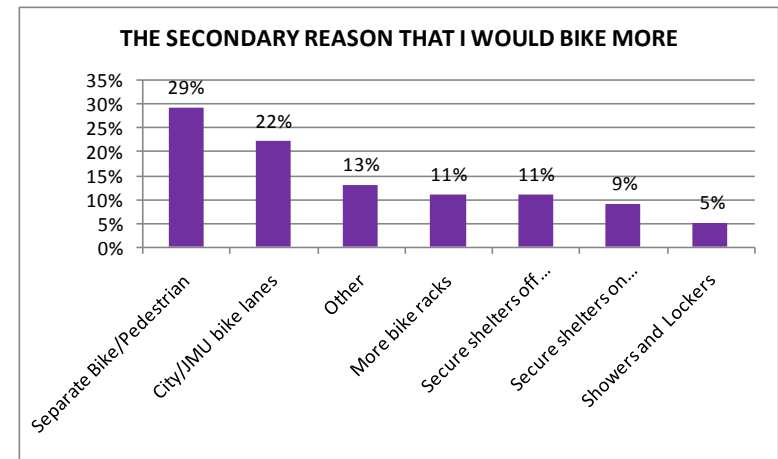
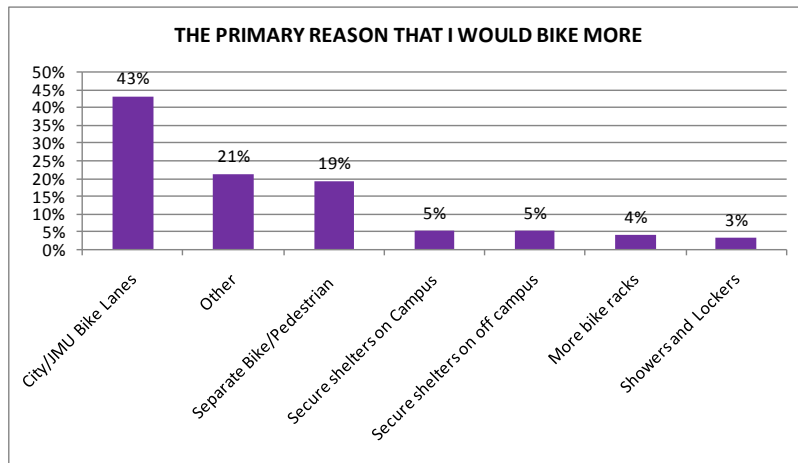


- The following example comments were provided concerning the potential for greater bicycle usage
- ☐ I don't think we can solve the commuting problem by relying on a bike solution. While we should ensure that cyclists have the best options when commuting to and from campus (including bike lanes), some of us, including myself, are simply not physically fit enough to bike to campus every day, especially in the cold weather. I think biking has an important place, but I think biking is more or less stable as is and won't really change if the university tweaks the busing/parking systems
 - ☐ I usually bike every day. I think JMU and Harrisonburg need to make the city and campus more bike friendly. Also perhaps they could implement a bike share program so that everyone would have the chance to bike.
 - ☐ If I weren't carrying so much stuff, wearing girly clothes, running late. ...Or, if cars were not allowed on campus.
 - ☐ If shower and locker facilities were provided.
 - ☐ If Stone Gate had a secure place to keep bikes, they do not even have bike racks
 - ☐ More routes and more security.
 - ☐ There were safer conditions so I could avoid cars as well as walking pedestrians.
 - ☐ I feel it is pretty unsafe to ride a bike from my house (1043) Sully Drive to campus (Zane Showker Hall) due to lack of bike lanes and having to share the sidewalk with pedestrians
 - ☐ If roads and campus were more bike friendly.
 - ☐ If drivers paid attention to bikers and bikers paid attention to drivers.

- Additional comments concerning potential increases in bicycle usage.
- ☐ If it wasn't so dangerous on Port Republic
 - ☐ Separate bike paths from pedestrians
 - ☐ More lanes, longer class passing time, more sheltered covers to protect bikes.
 - ☐ If there were people watching over the bikes, because I hear stories all the time about peoples bikes being vandalized on and off campus.
 - ☐ Showers and locker facilities would be nice
 - ☐ PLEASE work on at least establishing bike paths and more rack space! It is hard to bike then have no where to lock it up to and scary to bike on main roads that are crowded with people and cars without a shoulder
 - ☐ I would bike MORE IF THERE WERE MORE BIKE PATHS! Biking is an excellent alternative transportation!
 - ☐ If somehow, sheltered bike racks were available. It's not a big issue, but rain is a major reason why I won't bike because my bike gets wet and I want to be able to protect the investment I made in it.
 - ☐ If every semester or even twice a semester a club offers free repairs. If the school offered free repairs I wouldn't be as annoyed with riding my bike sometimes due to the chain and tires. I try to keep my bike up to notch with oil but the tires and rims I cannot repair

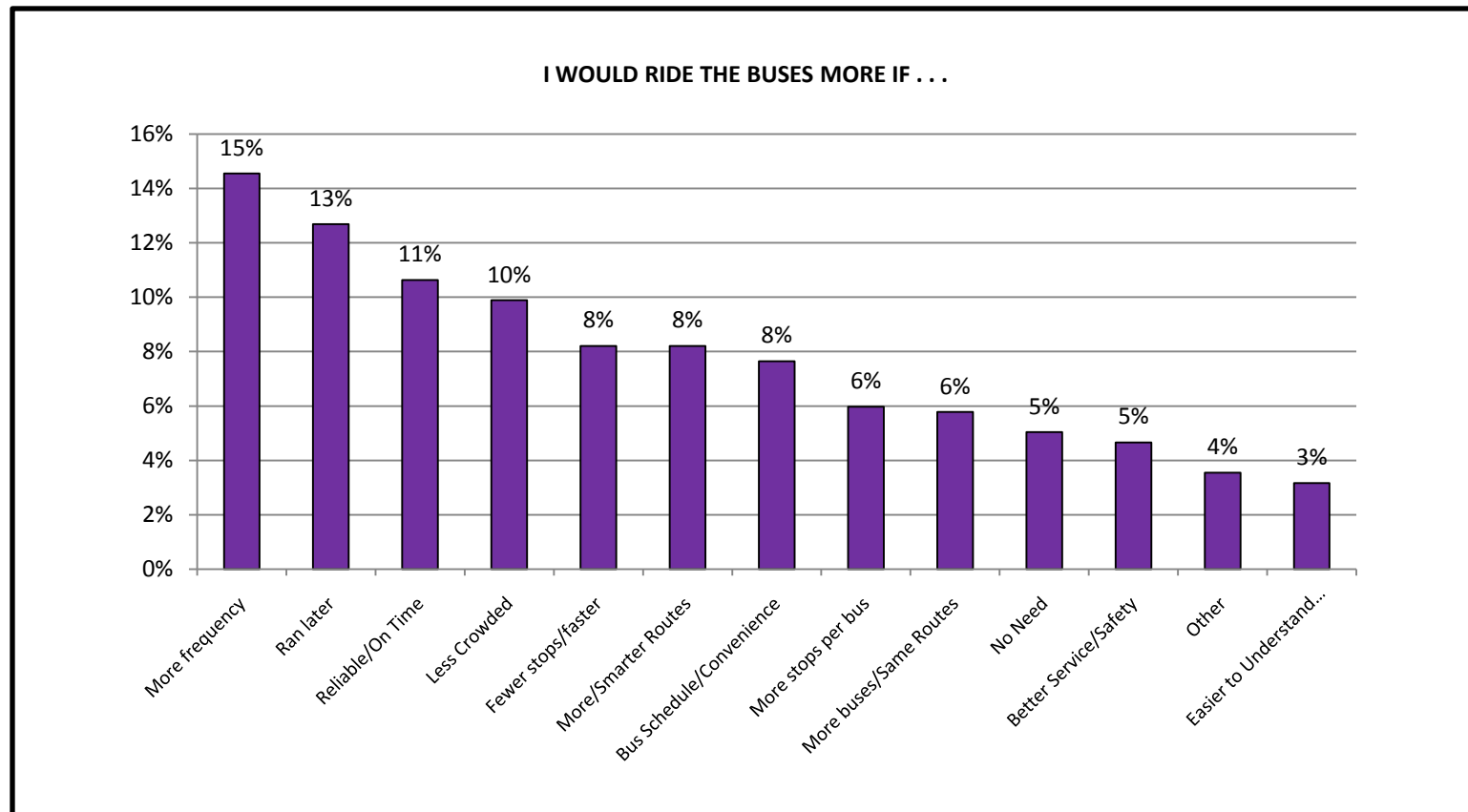
- Additional comments concerning the potential increased usage of bicycles.
 - ☐ If my bike would not be vandalized when I park it on campus
 - ☐ If drivers/bikers were more educated about bicycle laws
 - ☐ If the JMU Bike Club were allowed to have a sustained Bike Library for spare parts.
 - ☐ There were clear bikers lanes
 - ☐ All of the aforementioned suggestions are useful, especially lockers/increased numbers of bike racks, but the fact that cars and pedestrians hate sharing the road really hurts the motivation to bike everywhere.
 - ☐ There are plenty of bike racks at JMU however there is a lack of secure shelters for the bikes 24/7. All of my friends have gotten their bikes stolen, even with locks, or things taken off of their bikes or gotten back to it and it was completely broken. I wouldn't feel safe enough to leave a bike on campus for fear it would get stolen or broken and I would have no way home. I also think that there should be more bike lanes all over town. Even if I wanted to ride a bike from my apartment I couldn't because I live off 33 and there is no safe way to ride a bike on those busy streets. The pedestrian paths are always really crowded and it would be better if the pedestrian and Bike paths were separated
 - ☐ If we could keep bikes in the dorms
 - ☐ I would not be able to ride the bike at night because I don't feel safe in H'burg at night
 - ☐ If there were bike routes...that didn't have to be shared with pedestrians who don't care about bikers

- The charts below show the primary and secondary recommendations identified by the survey that would lead to more biking activity. The most prevalent recommendations are “City/JMU bike lanes”, and “Separate Bike/Pedestrian lanes”.



- Of interest is the 21% under “Primary - Other”. A total of 102 “Other responses” were submitted, of which 40 responses had to do with not having a bike - indicating that if bikes were available they would be used by students who don’t either own a bike or didn’t bring their bike to campus.

- The chart below shows the responses to “I would ride the buses more if . . . “. The focus is no increasing frequency, running later, and being more reliable.



BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PLANS PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

**HOSTED BY: HARRISONBURG BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN
PLANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



Join us at the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans Public Input Meeting and see what our 14-member Advisory Committee has been working on.

We are currently updating the city's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans which will lay the groundwork for future bicycle & pedestrian facilities in our community.

Please come share your vision and ideas with us!

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2009, 6:30PM-8:30PM
THOMAS HARRISON MIDDLE SCHOOL, FORUM

1311 West Market Street, Harrisonburg, VA

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
WWW.HARRISONBURGVA.GOV/BIKEPED
OR CALL THANH DANG, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT,
AT 434.5928**

